

What a Brain Injury is

Including what to look for, communication with school, and student/parental rights.

What is a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)?

Traumatic Brain Injury is an acquired **injury to the brain** caused by an **external force** resulting in a total or partial functional disability, psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

The term includes open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, including a) cognition; b) language; c) memory; d) attention; e) information processing; f) communication and g) speech. The term does not include brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or brain injuries induced by birth trauma. (Oregon Dept. of Education)

Parents/Guardians

Parents and guardians need to understand what a concussion is, that medical attention is required, that most students will get better, the potential effects on school learning and performance, and the importance of following guidance from their student's health care provider in order to ensure the most rapid and complete recovery possible.

With proper permission, members of the school team should meet on a regular basis to:

- Share observations and new information obtained from the family or health care provider.

- Work with the family to develop an appropriate program and timeline to meet the student's needs and explain as necessary the reasons for the resulting plan.
- Continually reassess the student for symptoms and progress in healing. This information can help the team to adjust the plan.

Mild TBI (mTBI) or Concussion

- Median duration of concussion symptoms following a mild TBI is 29 days.
- 85% have full recovery within 3-6 months post event.
- 15% experience chronic symptoms which significantly interfere with their activities of daily living.

Not all TBIs are Created Equal

- Concussion or mTBI: May require temporary accommodations.
- Mild Complicated TBI: May require temporary accommodations or a 504 Plan.
- Mild to Moderate TBI: May need a 504 Plan for accommodations or an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for specially designed instruction.
- Moderate to severe TBI: Generally, require an IEP. 14% of this population will need this level of service.

What to Look for After a Concussion

When students return to school after a concussion, school professionals should watch for:

- Increased problems paying attention or concentrating.
- Increased problems remembering or learning new information.
- Longer time needed to complete tasks or assignments.
- Difficulty organizing tasks or shifting between tasks.
- Inappropriate or impulsive behavior during class.

- Greater irritability.
- Less ability to cope with stress.
- More emotional than usual.
- Fatigue.
- Difficulties handling a stimulating school environment (lights, noise, etc.).
- Physical symptoms (headache, nausea, dizziness).

Communication with school & student/parental rights

When is a student ready to return to school after a concussion? A student with a head injury should be seen by a health care provider experienced in evaluating head injuries. A health care provider can make decisions about a student's readiness to return to school based on the number, type, and severity of symptoms experienced by the student. The health care provider should also offer guidance about when it is safe for a student to return to school and appropriate levels of cognitive and physical activity. Once a health care provider has given permission for the student to return to the classroom, school professionals can help monitor the student closely. With proper permission, school professionals can confer on their observations and share those observations with the family and other professionals involved in the student's recovery.

Resources:

- [TBI Fact Sheet for Parents](#)
- [Talking to parents and students about concussion and other head injuries](#)
- [CDC Returning to School after a Concussion: A Fact Sheet for School Professionals](#)

